

Message Text

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FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN IRISH PRESS JULY 27, 1977
UNDER HEADING CALL FOR REPENTANCE:

THE LONG HISTORY OF INJUSTICE VISITED BY BRITAIN UPON
IRELAND IS THE MAIN THEME OF THE REPORT COMMISSIONED BY
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND ON HOW THE BRITISH CAN BEST HELP
TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS IN NORTHERN IRELAND. IT IS A
REMARKABLY OUTSPOKEN AND ECUMENICAL EXAMINATION OF WHAT
ALL TOO MANY PEOPLE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE IRISH SEA HAVE
COME TO ACCEPT AS AN UTTERLY INTRACTABLE AND INSOLUBLE
SITUATION. IF EVERYBODY ADOPTED THAT ATTITUDE IT WOULD
INDEED BE A CONFESSION OF DESPAIR, BUT HOPE FOR THE
FUTURE RELATIONSHIP OF IRELAND AND BRITAIN IS EXPRESSED
IN THE CALL FOR "AN EXPLICIT AND SYMBOLIC EXPRESSION OF
REPENTANCE ON OUR PART, BOTH FOR WHAT HAS BEEN DONE
AMISS IN TIME PAST, AND FOR OUR PART IN ITS CONTINUANCE."

THE REPORT IS CRITICAL OF THE ROLE THE CHURCHES HAVE
PLAYED IN THE LONG HISTORY OF SECTARIANISM WHICH HAS
DEFILED THE NORTH, BUT NOT ALL CHURCH LEADERS DESERVE
TO BE CASTIGATED AS HAVING FAILED TO PLAY THEIR
PROPER PART IN THE BID FOR RECONCILIATION. MANY PEOPLE
WHOSE VOICES ARE LISTENED TO HAVE SPOKEN STRONGLY
AGAINST THE ENTIRE SECTARIAN CONCEPT OF LIFE AS IT HAS
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EXISTED IN THE NORTH FOR SO MANY YEARS. TO MENTION
ONLY TWO PRELATES, ONE CATHOLIC, THE OTHER CHURCH OF
IRELAND, DR. CAHAL DALY AND DR. ARTHUR BUTLER, IT IS
SCARCELY POSSIBLE TO THINK OF STERNER DENUNCIATIONS
OF INJUSTICE THAN THEY HAVE USED.

THERE IS IN THE REPORT A SENSE OF REALISM WHICH WILL

CERTAINLY ANNOY PEOPLE ON EACH SIDE OF WHAT WE MUST STILL REGARD AS THE RELIGIOUS DIVIDE. FOR INSTANCE, THE VIEW THAT THE BRITISH ARMY SHOULD WITHDRAW FROM THE NORTH IS NOT TO BE DISMISSED OUT OF HAND. VERY FEW PEOPLE, WITH THE NOTABLE EXCEPTION OF SUCH POLITICIANS AS THE FORMER MINISTER FOR POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS, DR. CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN, HAVE DISMISSED THE CASE FOR A BRITISH COMMITMENT TO WITHDRAWAL "OUT OF HAND." SOME OF THE SPEECHES OF THE EX-MINISTER, WHO HAS ALSO BEEN REPUDIATED BY HIS CONSTITUENTS, HAVE DONE NOTHING EXCEPT INFLAME SECTARIANISM. IF HE HAD STUCK TO HIS LAST, IN OTHER WORDS, DEVOTED HIS ATTENTION TO THE RUNNING OF HIS DEPARTMENT INSTEAD OF MAKING CHURLISH AND INJUDICIOUS SPEECHES ON MATTERS NOT WITHIN HIS COMPETENCE HE WOULD NOT HAVE LEFT AS MANY PROBLEMS FOR HIS SUCCESSOR TO TACKLE.

IT IS BEGINNING TO LOOK AS IF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES IN AN EFFORT TO BLOCK ANY PEACE INITIATIVE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND BY PRESIDENT CARTER. NO DOUBT, THE WHITEHALL ATTITUDE WAS CONVEYED TO MR. CARTER AS BEING THAT THIS WAS AN INTERNAL BRITISH MATTER. THIS IS SIMPLY NOT SO; AS WE ALL KNOW, PEACE IS INDIVISIBLE AND THERE ARE AT LEAST AS MANY INHABITANTS OF THE UNITED STATES OF

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IRISH EXTRACTION WHO ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE NORTHERN TRAGEDY AS THERE ARE MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY WHOSE ISRAELI STATE IS BEING HELPED MILITARILY AND ECONOMICALLY BY AMERICA TO MAINTAIN ITS INDEPENDENCE.

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